

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

The following listing of claims replaces all prior listings of claims presented in the application.

Claim 1 (currently amended): An absorbent article comprising:  
a main body including a liquid-pervious top sheet, a back sheet and an absorbent core sandwiched between said top sheet and said back sheet;  
a skin-protective ingredient containing layer ~~applied in a stripe, dot, or lattice pattern~~ on one surface of said top sheet on a side mating with skin of a wearer such that the skin-protective ingredient is released from said one surface of said top sheet to form an oily film on skin of the wearer while contacting the skin of the wearer; and  
a support layer ~~formed over~~ coating said skin-protective ingredient containing layer for retaining said skin-protective ingredient on said one surface of said top sheet and isolating said skin-protective ingredient containing layer from skin of the wearer, the entire said support layer being fully soluble in water;  
at a temperature higher than or equal to 25°C, solving in water of said support layer being promoted, and/or at a relative humidity of at least 30%, absorbing of moisture or solving in water of said support layer being promoted for exposing said skin-protective ingredient containing layer to skin of the wearer for permitting transfer of said skin-protective ingredient to skin of the wearer.

Claim 2 (previously presented): The absorbent article as set forth in claim 1, wherein said support layer is formed of at least one compound selected from the group consisting of polyethylene oxide having a molecular weight of from 100 to 500,000, polypropylene glycol having a molecular weight of from 100 to 10,000, and polyvinyl alcohol having a degree of polymerization of from 300 to 4000 and a degree of saponification of from 50 to 99.

Claim 3 (previously presented): The absorbent article as set forth in claim 1, wherein said skin-protective ingredient containing layer is formed of a compound that forms said oily film on skin of the wearer.

Claim 4 (currently amended): The absorbent article as set forth in claim 3, wherein said skin-protective ingredient containing layer is fluidized at 35°C or higher.

Claim 5 (previously presented): The absorbent article as set forth in claim 3, wherein said skin-protective ingredient containing layer is formed of at least one compound selected from the group consisting of liquid polyisoprene, squalane, pristane, ozocerite, ceresine, microcrystalline wax, polyethylene powder, liquid paraffin, petroleum jelly, and paraffin.

Claim 6 (canceled).

Claim 7 (previously presented): The absorbent article as set forth in claim 1, further including:

at least one of a leak-preventive cuff for preventing side leakage and a leg cuff for preventing leakage through an area around a wearer's thighs, and at least one of the leak-preventive cuff and the leg cuff are located between said top sheet and said skin-protective ingredient containing layer and said support layer.

Claim 8 (currently amended): An absorbent article comprising:  
a main body including a liquid-pervious top sheet, a back sheet and an absorbent core sandwiched between said top sheet and said back sheet;  
a skin-protective ingredient containing layer ~~applied in a stripe, dot, or lattice pattern~~ on one surface of said top sheet such that a skin-protective ingredient is released from said one surface of said top sheet and transferred to skin of a wearer to form an oily film on skin of the wearer, said skin-protective ingredient containing layer being in a liquified state at 35°C or higher; and  
a support layer ~~formed over~~ coating said skin-protective ingredient containing layer for retaining said skin-protective ingredient on said one surface of said top sheet and isolating said skin-protective ingredient containing layer from skin of the wearer, the entire said support layer being fully soluble in water;  
at a temperature higher than or equal to 25°C, solving in water of said support layer being promoted, and/or at a relative humidity of at least 30%, absorbing of moisture or solving in water of

said support layer being promoted for exposing said skin-protective ingredient containing layer to skin of the wearer for permitting transfer of said skin-protective ingredient to skin of the wearer.

Claim 9 (currently amended): An absorbent article comprising:

a main body including a liquid-pervious top sheet, a back sheet and an absorbent core sandwiched between said top sheet and said back sheet;

a skin-protective ingredient containing layer applied in a stripe, dot, or lattice pattern on one surface of said top sheet such that a skin-protective ingredient is released from said one surface of said top sheet and transferred to skin of a wearer for forming an oily film on skin of the wearer; and

a support layer formed over coating said skin-protective ingredient containing layer for retaining said skin-protective ingredient on said one surface of said top sheet and isolating said skin-protective ingredient containing layer from skin of the wearer, the entire said support layer being fully soluble in water;

said support layer being formed of at least one compound selected from among a group consisting of polyethylene oxide having a molecular weight of from 100 to 500,000, polypropylene glycol having a molecular weight of from 100 to 10,000, and polyvinyl alcohol having a degree of polymerization of from 300 to 4000 and a degree of saponification of from 50 to 99 for providing water solubility at a temperature higher than or equal to 25°C and for enhancement of moisture absorbability or the solubility in water at a relative humidity of at least 30%.

Claim 10 (currently amended): An absorbent article comprising:

a main body including a liquid-pervious top sheet, a back sheet and an absorbent core sandwiched between said top sheet and said back sheet;

a skin-protective ingredient containing layer applied in a stripe, dot, or lattice pattern to one surface of said top sheet such that a skin-protective ingredient is released from said one surface of said top sheet and transferred to skin of a wearer for forming an oily film on skin of the wearer, said skin-protective ingredient containing layer being in a liquified state at 35°C or higher; and

a support layer formed over coating said skin-protective ingredient containing layer for retaining said skin-protective ingredient on said one surface of said top sheet and isolating said skin-protective ingredient containing layer from skin of the wearer, the entire said support layer being

fully soluble in water;

said support layer being formed of at least one compound selected from among a group consisting of polyethylene oxide having a molecular weight of from 100 to 500,000, polypropylene glycol having a molecular weight of from 100 to 10,000, and polyvinyl alcohol having a degree of polymerization of from 300 to 4000 and a degree of saponification of from 50 to 99 for providing water solubility at a temperature higher than or equal to 25°C and for enhancement of moisture absorbability or the solubility in water at a relative humidity of at least 30 %.

Claim 11 (currently amended): The absorbent article as set forth in claim 1, wherein said support layer is formed of ~~at least one compound selected from the group consisting of~~ polyethylene oxide having a molecular weight of from ~~700 to 1,000~~ ~~100 to 500,000~~, and ~~polypropylene glycol having a molecular weight of from 100 to 10,000~~.

Claims 12-15 (canceled).